

Women's Basketball takes home MAC championship

By Sam Williams

Sports Editor

The University of Toledo women's basketball team took Cleveland by storm over the weekend. As the No. 6 seed, the women defeated No. 4 seed Northern Illinois University in an unexpected Mid-American Conference women's basketball championship game.

This is the Rocket's first MAC title since 2001. Both teams headed into the matchup with a great deal of momentum after upsetting higher-seeded teams in previous matchups, but Toledo was the team to come out on top and win 82-71.

The Rockets were led by a double-double from second-year guard Mikaela Boyd, who recorded 27 points and 14 rebounds in the Rocket victory. Weak shooting from the three-point arc in the first half held both teams back, with UT shooting just 2-10 and Northern Illinois only making two of its 14 attempts.

Toledo dominated the Huskies inside the key for the first half, with the Rockets scoring 18 points in the paint while Northern Illinois only had eight. Big back-to-back threes late in the second quarter sent the teams into halftime with the game tied.

The first half ended with the teams tied up at 30 points each. Boyd and second-year guard Olivia Cunningham paced the Rockets in the first half with eight points each. On the other side of the court, first-year Northern Illinois guard Janae Poisson led the Huskies with nine points.

The second half started rough for the Rockets with the Huskies gaining a quick five-point lead and third-year guard Jay-Ann Bravo-Harriott recording her fourth foul only 4:44 into the second half, sending her to the bench.

Trouble with fouls continued for Rockets, with three players having at least three fouls before the end of the third quarter. These issues led to NIU scoring an extra seven points off foul shots in the third quarter alone, but a scrappy Rocket team kept the difference in score to only one point.

The fourth quarter saw both teams giving their all for a chance at the MAC championship title, and they traded scores back and forth quickly.

The foul issues that plagued the Rockets in the third quarter quickly transferred to the Huskies in the fourth, with the Rockets making nine of 12 free throws in the fourth.

The fourth quarter continued to be huge for UT, as the Rockets scored 15 points in five minutes. The Huskies could only record five.

The Rocket offense remained hot, with the team extending its lead to 12 points late in the fourth on the back of a huge quarter for Boyd, who had 15 points in the fourth quarter alone.

A dagger three by Poisson led to a Huskie timeout as they looked for solutions to the late game lead, but Toledo's late game momentum could not be stopped.

As the game reached the 1:30 mark, the Huskies began to force the Rockets to the foul line in an attempt to save the game, but UT's stellar free throw shooting kept the lead heavily in the Rockets' favor.

UT secured the game with an impressive final quarter, shooting nine of 12 from the field and 16 of 19 from the free throw line in the fourth.

The Huskies were unable to formulate any resemblance of a late-game comeback, and the Rockets took home the victory, along with the MAC title, with a final score of 82-71.

This victory gives the Rockets a guaranteed spot in the upcoming NCAA tournament, and the team awaits the announcement of who its opponent will